



EPA Plans Tests on Soil, Underground Water

Lusher Street Ground Water Contamination Site
Elkhart, Indiana

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EPA contacts

You may contact these EPA team members for questions or comments about the Lusher site pollution investigation.

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For more information

To find more details about the Lusher site visit the EPA Web page:
www.epa.gov/region5/sites/lusher

A repository of documents about the site has been established at the Elkhart Public Library, Reference Services, 300 S. Second St.

In order to determine the nature and extent of contamination and recommend a cleanup option, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will test soil and underground water supplies in an area centered around Elkhart's Lusher Avenue. Taking samples and testing for contamination is part of an ongoing environmental investigation at the site tainted by a family of chemicals called "chlorinated solvents." Sampling results will help EPA find out the source of this contamination, how far the contamination extends and where more testing may be needed.

At this time EPA has set boundaries for the Lusher site at the St. Joseph River to the north, State Road 19 (Nappanee Street) to the west, Hively Avenue to the south and Oakland Avenue to the east.

Background

This March EPA added the Lusher site to the National Priorities List. The NPL is a roster of the nation's most hazardous waste sites eligible for cleanup under EPA's Superfund program. The goals of Superfund are to protect human health and the environment by cleaning up polluted sites; involving community members in the cleanup process; making those responsible for the pollution pay for the work; and returning polluted land to productive use.

In the late 1980s the Indiana Health Department found high levels of chemicals in many private drinking water wells, which indicated underground water supplies (called ground water in environmental terms) had been contaminated. EPA installed carbon filters in 13 residences and businesses to reduce the contamination. Water supplies of seven residences and businesses were converted to municipal water, and later municipal water lines were extended to the majority of affected properties.

More sampling was done in 2006 and 12 more wells exceeded allowable drinking water concentrations for chlorinated solvents. Residents were supplied with carbon filters and bottled water.

Site pollutants

The site contains a ground-water plume, which is an underground mass of contaminated water. The pollution in this plume, chlorinated solvents, is used in a variety of industrial applications including degreasers, plastic foam, adhesives, refrigerants, resins and fibers. Chlorinated solvents at the Lusher site include these hazardous chemicals: 1,1,1-TCA (1,1,1-trichloroethane); TCE (trichloroethylene); 1,1-DCE (1,1-dichloroethylene); and other chlorinated compounds.

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Public outreach

This September EPA met with residents, businesses, and local officials in Elkhart to find out their concerns about the site, their information needs, and how and when citizens would like to be involved in the Superfund process.

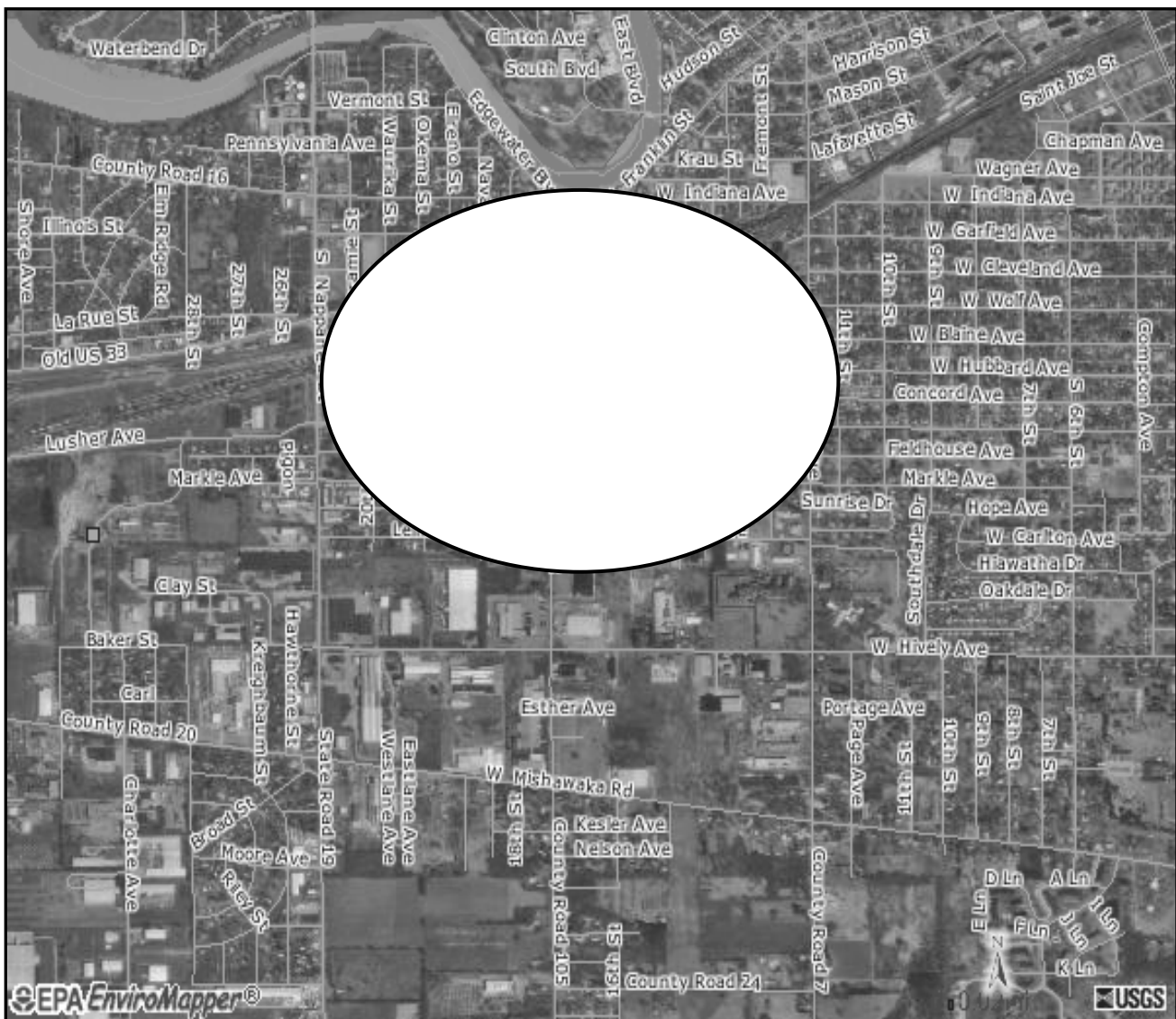
Based on responses, EPA is developing a community involvement plan. Open houses and other public events give Agency staffers an opportunity to meet with people who may be affected by the site.

These types of meetings and fact sheets like this one share the latest news about sites and provide EPA contact information to people needing more details.

Who pays?

Individuals or companies who may have contributed to contamination at Superfund sites are called PRPs or potentially responsible parties.

Whenever possible through administrative and legal actions EPA requires PRPs to clean up hazardous waste sites they have contaminated.



The oval in this aerial view marks the approximate location of the area in Elkhart where underground water supplies (ground water) have been contaminated with industrial chemicals. Many of the homes and businesses in the affected section have been connected to municipal water because their private wells were tainted with the chemicals.